

Fallston Community Council Meeting Notes May 22, 2012

Attendees: Dave Williams, George Twigg, Larry Kreis, Andy Amasia, Morita Bruce

Guests (and organization represented): Jane Walker (County Executive Craig), County Councilman Joe Woods and Legislative Assistant Joe Cluster (District B), Andrew Tress (County Council President Boniface), Capt. Keith Warner (HC Sheriffs Office), Marissa Gallo (The Aegis), Jim Franczkowski (Stoneybrooke HOA), Stephanie Flasch (Greater Fallston Association), Joe Fortier, Mary Fortier and Elayne Frampton (Huntington neighborhood), Chris Basista, Michael McLune and Bryan McGregor (NiSource-CLS), Pat Roddy, Alex Oehle, Brendan Wene, Doug Holley, John L. Rinkus, Brad Edmonds and Jeff Barna (Columbia Gas Transmission), Delegate Rick Impallaria.

The meeting was called to order at 6:40 pm by Dave Williams. Minutes of the previous meeting were approved. The next FCC meeting is July 24, 2012.

Jim Riley has resigned from the FCC so there's an opening available. Interested residents may contact Jane Walker (410-638-3355, jlwalker@harfordcountymd.gov) or Patricia Gonzalez (pwgonzalez@harfordcountymd.gov). Since Mr. Riley reported to FCC on items of interest from Harford's Department of Inspections, Licenses and Permits, a member is now needed to make this contact before FCC meetings.

Sheriff's Office

Captain Warner, Northern Precinct, reported slight decreases in burglaries in the Fallston area. He reminded everyone to keep car doors and home doors locked even when people are at home, and to hide garage door openers, keys, and valuables. Even inside the house, put them where they can't be casually seen because that makes them a target.

On March 11, three purses were stolen from cars parked near the Ma & Pa Trail. Purses, GPS and other valuable should be locked inside the trunk. One suspect was caught by an off-duty policeman.

Beware of people claiming to be "bill collectors" from BG&E. Also note, however, that BG&E representatives are starting to replace existing meters with Smart Meters; before they arrive you should receive notification in the mail. If your meters are outside they have no need to come to your door.

Harford is 4th in Maryland in number of traffic deaths. A task force is working on potential solutions; meanwhile, traffic citations continue to be issued.

Old Business

Ms. Walker, Constituent Services Coordinator for County Executive Craig, said she attends meetings to listen and to share concerns raised with Mr. Craig. (Contact information above.)

Councilman Woods introduced his new Legislative Aide, Mr. Joe Cluster. His contact information will be available soon. Mr. Andrew Tress introduced himself, he is the Legislative Aide for County Council President Boniface (410-638-3343 ext.1813, atress@harfordcountymd.gov).

The County's budget bill is being debated at tonight's County Council meeting. Budgets are available online. The Board of Education submitted a separate, bigger budget than the County Executive requested in his budget.

Mr. Williams explained that the County Charter Amendments were introduced and are available online (<http://www.harfordcountymd.gov/council/index.cfm?ID=882>). The proposed changes to the Charter are in Bills 12-29 through 12-34. FCC can provide comments or testimony on any of these bills. Bills that are approved by the County Council will be on the November general election ballot.

Mr. Woods and Mr. Williams investigated the Rochelle Meadows traffic problem and were informed that traffic calming devices won't be effective because people learn how to continue speeding. Adding stop signs at intersections is under consideration. The added traffic and higher speeds are being blamed by long-time residents on the residents in the new subdivision behind them.

Construction has begun at Amur Village for the new CVS drug store and APG Federal Credit Union buildings. Permits are underway for a Texas Roadhouse restaurant. Additional buildings are still "in planning".

Guest Speaker

Pat Roddy and Alex Oehle, Columbia Gas Transmission, and their team explained the proposed natural gas line extension from Owings Mills to Fallston and answered questions. They may be contacted at the project office: 443-330-5538

The purpose of the additional line is for safety, efficiency and reliability improvements to serve their customer, BG&E. Their job is to transport natural gas via underground pipelines ("lines"). Line MA already exists and is a 20" diameter line. The MB line will enable the MA line to be taken out of service and repaired while gas continues to flow, uninterrupted, in the MB line. The new MB line will be 26" in diameter and will parallel the old MA line except in one area of Fallston (milepost 17.8) near the Rutledge compressor station. This "jog" is because new, dense housing has been built since the MA line was installed and it prevents the MB line from having the separation distance it is required to have from the MA line. It would go through peoples' houses.

FERC (Federal Energy Review Commission) action is ongoing on Columbia's "Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity" and is collecting public comments at FERC.gov. Columbia is trying to avoid or minimize impacts based on public comments and input.

Mr. Fortier thanked Columbia for agreeing to consider an alternate route to the north.

There was much discussion about community concerns in the "jog" area. Residents face the loss of forested areas buffering their home from noise and unwanted sights, loss of use of large parts of their property including septic reserve areas, soil and slope instability, groundwater impacts and decreased property values. Other questions discussed include:

- Why is more land being taken than we were told about when we bought our homes?
(Answer: Standards for required separation distances have changed, plus we have to stay away from BG&E's power transmission lines and the area they need to reserve for replacement of their power lines/towers.)
- Are the three 90-degree turns likely to be a weak point in the pipe? (A: They are actually curved bends and aren't a problem; radius of the curve will be six times the pipe diameter. The pipeline will be water-tested for 8 hours before use.)
- How many times has the MA line been down so far" (A: We're trying to prevent failure and prevent having to shut off natural gas in the winter if it does need repair. Delegate Impallaria voiced his opinion that the MB line was needed.)
- How will heavy equipment and large pipe sections be moved through neighborhoods?
(A: We'll use traffic controls, flaggers, etc. Mr. Williams observed that Harford allows developments with only one way in or out and this could be a problem. He just had a sinkhole open up at his neighborhood's entrance, for example. Mr. Roddy agreed that this is also a concern of BG&E.)
- Is a parallel line the only way to assure reliability? (A: Redundant lines are FERC's preferred method so Columbia is doing this routinely.)
- Since the MA line continues past Fallston, shouldn't Harford recognize that line MB will likely impact other new houses if they aren't kept further away from rights-of-way (ROWS)? (A: Right now, Columbia can't say for sure when or if the line will expand, nor can they influence County rules on development.)

- Who pays the cost of this project? (A: FERC, BG&E and the Public Service Commission determine the rates needed to maintain acceptable rates of return.)
- Will the temporary ROW used for construction be replanted? (A: Yes)
- What are the requirements for replacing disturbed forest land? (Ms. Walker: Reforestation is required by Harford. Mr. Roddy: Reforestation Plans must be approved by Harford and Baltimore Counties and by Maryland when parks are disturbed. Columbia must comply unless doing so would "obstruct, conflict with or stop" the project.)
- Are there any problems that would speed up construction of MB? (A: No, we just did an integrity check and repaired as needed.)

Mr. Roddy concluded by saying Columbia wants to hear from you, feel free to call us. This is just the beginning of the project and there is still time to have an impact.

Mr. Williams then read a draft FCC letter to Mr. Craig (a copy had been provided prior to the meeting). The letter identified concerns from local residents and asked for involvement and monitoring of Columbia's various plans by the appropriate Harford departments and divisions. The letter was approved.

New Business

A Community Input Meeting will be held on June 19, 6:00 - 7:00pm at the Fallston Fire Company (training room) for "Hamilton", a development of 71 single family homes on 24.5 acres on MD Route 147 (Harford Road) between Bagley Street and Connolly Road.

Stephanie Flasch announced the formation of the "Build It Now" committee to lobby for a new school to be constructed to replace the old, outdated Youths Benefit ES. The school has numerous problems such as lead in the drinking water, computer labs being used for storage due to lack of space and separation of students into two buildings. At present the committee is fighting against wasting tax money to add air conditioning to the old buildings since they have been told none of the equipment can be used in a new building. Mr. Williams, who is on the citizens' budget review committee, commented that the School Board didn't want to prioritize their capital budgets until after a new facilities study is done and analyzed. It's the position of the County Council that school construction projects have already been prioritized, but the County Executive wants a package deal that includes Havre de Grace HS as a top priority.

FCC is keeping an eye on the proposed Waste Transfer Station on Route 7 in Joppa, but Joppa/Joppatowne Community Council has the lead. The surrounding residential community is strongly opposed to the project because of traffic, safety and environmental concerns. There was a huge turnout opposing this project at the County Council's budget hearing, and Councilmen Woods and Guthrie oppose it also.

Mr. Williams discussed the Fire and Emergency Management Service (EMS) Commission and the issue of how to most effectively integrate the paid and volunteer EMS staff and firefighting staff. Budget reductions imposed last year by the county recently caused emergency responders to request more money to reimburse them for services actually rendered. At present each fire company makes its own decisions on hiring, mix of paid and volunteer staff, training, discipline, etc. One concern is if a Commission composed of people unfamiliar with the peculiarities of Harford County's various districts should "advise" or "control" Harford's volunteer fire and emergency medical personnel. Other recommendations for change are also being considered.

Good of the Council

Mr. Williams met with Aaron Tomarchio, head of Mr. Craig's staff, to talk about FCC. The only concern voiced was that the public only comes when they have a problem.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 pm.

Submitted by Morita Bruce and Dave Williams